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Concert To Thank Tsunami Relief Fund-Raisers

For Immediate Release
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(August 24, 2005- TROY)- Mayor Harry J Tutunjian, the City of Troy, and world renowned singers Ruth Pelham and Lakshmi Damayanthi will present a "Hands Around the World" community concert on Thursday, August 25th at 7 p.m. in Riverfront Park as a thank you to the many residents that raised money earlier this year to help the victims of the Tsunami last December.

Sponsored by the City of Troy, the concert is being coordinated by Ruth Pelham, the founder and co-coordinator of the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund, which implemented six tsunami relief projects in southern Sri Lanka, and generated \$70,000 from hundreds of individuals, businesses, organizations, and schools within fourteen states.

The highlight of the "Hands Around the World" concert in Troy will be the guest appearance of fifth graders from Turnpike Elementary School who, in early June of 2005, were part of an international songwriting project that Pelham designed to help Troy students reach out to children in Sri Lanka whose lives had been affected by the tsunami.

Pelham took a Sri Lankan folk song that she learned during her trip to Sri Lanka in 2002, and with the help of the students, composed new words expressing the Troy student's feelings of compassion for the children of Sri Lanka whose lives had been devastated by the tsunami.

"Support from around the world poured in to help the people of the Tsunami disaster, and people in the capital district, and the City of Troy, were no exception," Tutunjian said. "This event is a thank you to all of those who helped out, but it's also an open invitation for everyone around the area."

The Fund was started to help Tuan Razik -- a Cobleskill resident and native of Sri Lanka, who lost dozens of friends and family in the tsunami - to purchase an airline ticket to Sri Lanka after the tsunami. Razik, co-coordinator of the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund and a spokesperson for the plight of the thousands of tsunami victims of Sri Lanka, will be a special guest at the "Hands Around the World" concert.

The end-of-summer concert will feature Lakshmi Damayanthi and Ruth Pelham, whose exuberant performances are contagious. Relaxed and spontaneous, professional and practiced, their stage rapport is full of warmth and authenticity. The two musicians began their artistic collaboration in 2002 when they traveled to numerous Sri

Lankan schools and villages to perform with a chorus of twenty-five children that was directed by Ms. Damayanthi.

Lakshmi Damayanthi is hailed as a national treasure in Sri Lanka, and is a singer, dancer, and actress who has starred in dozens of plays, television shows, and musical ensembles in her native country. She is also a school music teacher for children and teens in Sri Lanka. This is her first visit to the United States, and the "Hands Around the World" concert will mark the beginning of her availability to American audiences.

The concert is free, although contributions will be gladly welcomed to support the continuing tsunami relief projects of the Friends of Sri Lanka Fund.